

strangers in the middle of the night, counsel young youth about the vital importance of education, or helping adults to read and write, Brother Booker's every act has been selfless and charitable.

Brother Booker has long been a voice of conscience in Milwaukee. When he speaks, people literally hang on to his words and stop in their tracks. Aside from his personal contributions to the community, Brother Booker has been instrumental in convincing others to provide financial backing for scores of community development projects which have strengthened our neighborhoods. The Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel put it best when it recently wrote, "Ashe is a man with an extraordinary social conscience . . . this champion of the poor has as much compassion as Job had patience."

Milwaukee has been truly blessed by his presence in our community. We know that no one can fill Brother Booker's shoes. Fortunately, he has inspired a countless number of people in our community to continue his good works and uphold his principles. Indeed, Brother Booker will remain a spiritual force in Milwaukee well into the next century. Despite his retirement, his work will be carried on by the thousands whose lives he has touched.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to Brother Booker T. Ashe. I join with the city of Milwaukee in praising this outstanding individual and friend to all, and wish him health and happiness in his retirement.

DON'T HURT VETERANS

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 30, 1995

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, November 29, the House of Representatives voted to return the VA-HUD appropriations bill to conference. By doing so, Congress recognized that the bill was unfair legislation which neglected the needs of our Nation's veterans and military retirees.

The bill underfunded many important veterans programs. It eliminated educational help for those willing to work at VA facilities. It cut money for construction, modernization, and improvement of VA facilities. It reduced funding for VA programs by over \$40 million from last year.

But above all, the VA-HUD bill provided insufficient funding for veterans medical care—\$400 million less than the President requested. In my district, tens of thousands of veterans and military retirees rely on VA medical programs. The cuts in the bill would have threatened the quality care they depend on.

I joined the 217 other Members—Democrats and Republicans—to recommit the VA-HUD bill in order to fix this serious flaw. Our motion to recommit specifically requested that \$213 million be restored to veterans' health care programs. Without this additional funding, the bill would have forced our veterans and military retirees to make an extra and unfair sacrifice in the name of deficit reduction.

Veterans and military retirees are willing to take their fair share of spending cuts in order to eliminate the deficit. But they do not deserve burdensome cuts which unfairly target them.

Our bipartisan vote yesterday will go a long way toward making the bill better, one that treats all our Nation's veterans and retirees fairly.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING TROOPS IN BOSNIA REMAIN

HON. DOUG BEREUTER

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 30, 1995

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member commends to his colleagues an editorial which appeared in the Omaha World-Herald on November 29, 1995.

SPEECH DIDN'T BUILD CONFIDENCE; QUESTIONS ABOUT BOSNIA REMAIN

People who looked for a specific, confidence-building explanation for sending American troops to Bosnia were entitled to be disappointed with President Clinton's speech Monday night.

Clinton addressed the nation to seek support for his proposal to send 20,000 troops into an arena where political, ethnic and religious factions have been waging war for centuries. He said 20,000 troops are needed to help NATO enforce the peace agreement negotiated at Dayton, Ohio, by the presidents of Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia.

The president was unconvincing even on the central question of why the national interest requires placing American men and women on the ground in the middle of this ancient conflict. (The U.S. Air Force and Navy already are heavily involved.)

Yes, as he said, America has ideals. Yes, it has fought in Europe twice before to "triumph over tyranny." Yes, it has certain international responsibilities that come with being the world's most powerful nation. And certainly the suffering of innocent civilians in Bosnia-Herzegovina has touched hearts around the world.

But a recitation of those facts doesn't constitute a reasoned argument for putting American ground troops in extreme peril. This isn't World War I, when America came to the aid of Western democracies to prevent their being crushed by imperial powers. Neither is it World War II, when America entered and ultimately led the great struggle to prevent the Nazis and fascists from enslaving a good part of the world.

The conflict in the Balkans is a regional problem. No one has demonstrated that it is a threat to Western civilization in general or to America's national interests.

The president said, "We're all vulnerable to the organized forces of intolerance and destruction, terrorism, ethnic, religious and regional rivalries, the spread of organized crime and weapons on mass destruction and drug trafficking. Just as surely as fascism and communism, these forces also threaten freedom and democracy, peace and prosperity. And they, too, demand American leadership."

Few would question the world's vulnerability to those forces. But what does any of that have to do with sending U.S. troops to Bosnia? If these "organized forces" are the primary reason for committing troops, why doesn't the United States have an infantry division in Rwanda, in Northern Ireland, in India, in Pakistan?

Clinton said the Americans would fight back if attacked. "We will fight fire with fire, and then some," he said. Clinton said the mission would take about a year.

How does anybody know that? As * * * noted, animosities have been known to lie

dormant in the Balkans for years, then break out in bitter, bloody warfare. What guarantee does Clinton have that fighting wouldn't resume as soon as the Americans left?

What assurances does he offer that the mission won't go on indefinitely? How could anybody be sure that the fighting wouldn't escalate if American troops were attacked and forced to defend themselves?

In promising that the troops would help restore normal life for the people of Bosnia, Clinton made it sound as though the people of Bosnia were one society. They are badly divided, however. What Clinton didn't say is that the peace treaty, to accommodate the fact that the factions detest each other deeply, provides for the partition of the country into a Bosnian-Serb sector and a Muslim-Croat sector. * * *

TRIBUTE TO ELLEN JEPSON

HON. DUNCAN HUNTER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 30, 1995

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the truly remarkable life and accomplishments of a constituent in my district, Mrs. Ellen Jepson, of Imperial, CA. Mrs. Jepson recently passed away in La Jolla, CA, after surgery at a local hospital. A mother of three and grandmother of six, Ellen can best be described as an extraordinary woman who never missed an opportunity to give of herself.

A native of Oklahoma, Ellen devoted much of her time and energy as a volunteer for various senior citizen organizations in the Imperial Valley. Her reputation as a considerate and caring human being was well known throughout the communities of the Valley. Ellen's desire to help others was an overriding concern that occupied her life until her final days.

One of Ellen's previous responsibilities included directing the senior information and referral service for the Salvation Army. During a period in her life when many people would have been content simply pursuing leisurely activities, Ellen opted to make assisting others her passion. Regularly acknowledged for her outstanding conduct, Mrs. Jepson was honored by numerous local organizations and three California Governors for her selfless work.

Most recently, Ellen served as the volunteer director of senior emergency services for the United Way of Imperial County. She tirelessly assisted seniors in a variety of ways: arranging for transportation to medical appointments, filling out paperwork, and providing help with utility bills and medication payments. Moreover, as a member of the advisory board to the Agency on Aging, Ellen was able to further assist seniors by providing Government officials with the input necessary to formulate policy for the region's aged population.

Mr. Speaker, in an age where our own personal needs and requirements seem to monopolize our priorities, I feel people like Mrs. Ellen Jepson should be recognized as heroes. I believe that perhaps we should all take note of Ellen's productive and esteemed life and modify our own accordingly. Too often, our lives are filled with news and accounts that revolve around the negative; Ellen was a positive assurance that this Nation is made up of

generous and considerate human beings. I will sorely miss her.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2099,
DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND
URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND
INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996

SPEECH OF

HON. Y. TIM HUTCHINSON

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 29, 1995

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. Speaker, as a staunch defender of both veterans and the balanced budget, I want to set the record straight on how veterans are being treated under the GOP's 7-year plan.

Under the conference agreement for VA/ HUD appropriations, VA Medical Care is increased by \$400 million over last year's level. Medical Research is increased by \$5 million over last year's level and the Minor Construction Program is increased by \$37 million over last year's level. Through responsible deficit reduction measures, we seek to preserve the dignity of veterans and the standard of living for future generations.

The VA/ HUD Appropriations Act is very generous to veterans' programs. In fact, the VA/ HUD act reflects cuts in nearly every other agency program or account except VA's Medical Care Account. This increase comes at a time of a declining population and declining utilization of VA hospitals. It might interest you to know that on any given day between 23 percent and 50 percent of all beds in VA hospitals lie vacant. The money used to staff, and heat empty beds could be better used in the actual delivery of services to veterans.

According to GAO, if the VA were to analyze the President's budget using the same assumptions the Department used when it analyzed the budget approved by the Congress, the VA would find that veterans are better off under the congressional budget than under the President's own plan. When the Secretary of Veterans Affairs was asked if veterans would suffer more under the Clinton administration's plan he said, "that's absolutely right."

The Republican plan will preserve and fund VA health care at a level that ensures the quality that veterans have come to expect. But it also tasks the system to become more efficient and deliver care in a more cost-effective manner. VA spends more than \$5,000 per patient per year. This is \$1,800 more than Medicare and a whopping \$3,800 more than the private sector. Looking at these numbers, there must be ways for the VA to become more efficient.

Health care is changing rapidly and VA must be part of that change.

We need to question the need for more buildings and instead look for ways to provide more care. VA has historically been an institutionally based system that now is forced to support an aging network of 173 hospitals, 376 outpatient clinics, 133 nursing homes, and 39 domiciliaries. We need to seriously examine what, where, and if VA needs to build in order to better serve veterans. The approach taken by this conference bill is a step in the right di-

rection by asking the VA to assemble a long-term plan for its infrastructure and construction needs. The VA, must begin to plan strategically like the private sector, taking into consideration such factors as an increasingly constrained budgetary environment, a declining veteran population, shifting demographics, and the rapidly changing health care market. Today, when 9 out of 10 veterans have access to private health insurance, and 10 percent of current VA users are leaving the VA system to use Medicare, we seriously have to question the need for more facilities. The major construction level of \$136 million and the minor construction level of \$190 million reverse the historical trend of anchoring the VA in bricks and mortar. Today's health care is becoming less and less institutional. The VA must be part of that trend. It must have the flexibility to go to the veterans instead of requiring the veteran to travel long distances to procure health care in often aging and obsolete facilities.

I believe that veterans and taxpayers will be better served by a VA that is more efficient and provides more accountability to those who provide the basis of its support. This bill is pro-veteran. It shows that Republicans are committed to putting veterans first.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2099,
DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS
AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND
URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND
INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996

SPEECH OF

HON. CORRINE BROWN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 29, 1995

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to the conference report on the VA-HUD appropriations bill. President Clinton has announced his intention to veto this bill because it funds veterans programs at \$900 million less than what he requested in his budget.

Right now, nearly 2 million veterans live in Florida, nearly 60,000 in my district alone. More veterans live in Florida than in any other State except one. And 100 veterans move to Florida every day. These men and women are growing older and need medical care.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is a slap in the face to Florida's veterans. The President requested \$154 million for the Brevard County Hospital which would serve Florida's veterans in and around my district. But the Republicans in Congress took away that money. That hospital so desperately needed by veterans will not be built.

Where do sick veterans in Florida go for hospital care? For the last few years, hundreds of Florida veterans who have developed psychological problems are shipped out of State. That is right. They get shipped off to Mississippi and Alabama for their care. Two beautiful States, indeed, but far away from their loved ones in Florida. I think this is wrong. To me, there is nothing more compelling than the need to care for veterans who suffer the effects of fighting our wars. That is why Florida needs the Brevard County Hospital.

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, with this bill, almost all renovation and construction of veteran's health facilities will terminate. A funding freeze would lead to a sharp reduction in the number of employees who counsel veterans and decide claims for benefits. The VA's award-winning medical and prosthetic research program would be cut in every year under the freeze.

Mr. Speaker, balancing the budget is a top priority. And I am committed to doing just that. The President is also committed to a balanced budget. But in balancing the budget, a shared sacrifice is necessary. And I share the President's view that we must not balance the budget on the backs of our Nation's most fragile citizens—seniors, veterans, poor women, children, and the disabled.

Our Nation's veterans earned their benefits through service and sacrifice. It should be America's highest priority to honor our commitment with our veterans. I believe it is wrong to abandon our veterans who have gone in harm's way to serve our country. We need to take care of our U.S. servicemen and women—when they are fighting our wars, and when, as veterans, they need health care. I urge my colleagues to vote against this bill.

AMOS F. LONGORIA POST OFFICE
BUILDING

HON. FRANK TEJEDA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 30, 1995

Mr. TEJEDA. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce to the House that I have introduced legislation today to designate the United States Post Office building located at 7980 FM 327 in Elmendorf, TX as the "Amos F. Longoria Post Office Building."

During the August district work period, the citizens of Elmendorf presented me with a petition requesting that their new postal building, opening in December 1995, be named in honor of Pvt. Amos F. Longoria.

Amos Longoria was born in Elmendorf, TX on September 12, 1924. He was the son of humble parents, Bonaficio and Juanita F. Longoria. He had four sisters and two brothers: Pauline Longoria, Marie Longoria Welch, George Longoria, William Longoria, Tommie Longoria Lynch, and Bonnie Longoria de Leon.

Amos F. Longoria also had many close friends who grew up with him and shared love and caring during his short life. Amos is remembered as a happy person. He had many friends, and was kind and considerate to all. He enjoyed hunting, fishing, and many other sporting activities. He enjoyed music, played the guitar and sang. He is said to have had a good sense of humor, liked to laugh and make others laugh.

During his last year of school at Elmendorf, Amos F. Longoria was drafted into the U.S. Army in April of 1943. World War II was raging. Amos, though only 18 years old, was excited to report for basic training at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, TX. He was then sent to Camp Wheeler in Georgia.

Amos F. Longoria volunteered to serve overseas in the European theater. He had hopes of being near his older brother, George, who was serving in the 36th Infantry Division.